

Message Text

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AMEMBASSY PARIS
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USEC BRUSSELS

C O N F I D E N T I A L MADRID 9720

E.O.11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, PFOR, SP
SUBJECT: PROMINENT CHURCHMAN SIGNALS OPPOSITION TO USE BY POLITICAL
PARTIES OF CHRISTIAN LABEE

REF: MADRID 9692

1. IN HIS MOST RECENT WEEKLY "CHRISTIAN LETTER", MADRID'S
CARDINAL ENRIQUE Y TARANCON (WHO IS ALSO PRESIDENT OF
THE SPANISH BISHOPS CONFERENCE) EXPRESSED THE VIEW THAT
FOR THE CHURCH'S OWN SAKE IT IS PREFERABLE THAT POLITICAL
PARTIES NOT USE THE NAME CHRISTIAN.

2. ACKNOWLEDGING THAT THE CHURCH HIERARCHY IN THE PAST
GAVE APPROVAL, "AT LEATS", TO THE INITIATION OF SUCH
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PARTIES, AND EXPRESSING UNDERATANG FOR WHAT MOTIVATED
THE ACTION IN PAST CIRCUMSTANCES, THE CARDINAL, WHO IS
KNOWN AS A MODERATE, DECLARED HE AND MANY OTHER "WONDER"
IF IN SPAIN'S CURRENT MOMENT OF POLITICAL TRANSITION
IT IS UUSEFUL THAT THERE SHOULD EXIST A PARTY WITH THE
NAME CHRISTIAN".

3. ANSWERING HIS OWN QUESTION, TARANCON QOTED THE VATICAN II DECLARATION THAT " THE POLITICAL COMMUNITY AND THE CHURCH ARE INDEPENDENT AND AUTONOMOUS", AND ADDED, "WHICH MEANS THAT THE CHURCH AS SUCH CHRISTIANITY-- CANNOT BE TIED TO ANY POLITICAL REGIME AND LESS, OBVIOUSLY TO A POLITICAL TENDENCY WHICH MUST INEVITABLY BE A SOURCE OF DIVISION." HE ALSO QUOTED THE VATICAN II ASSERTION THAT "TO NO ONE IS IT PERMITTED TO CLAIM EXCLUSIVELY THE AUTHORITY OF THE CHURCH OR THE EXPRESSION THE ONLY ONE OF THE GOSPEL WHICH WOULD BE SIMPLY LAMENTABLE".

4. NOWHERE DID TARANCON IMPLY ANY WRONGDOING OR EVIL INTENT ON THE PART OF THOSE POLITICIANS IDENTIFYING THEMSELVES (AS MANY HAVE FOR A LONG TIME) AS CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS. HIS ARGUMENT WAS COUCHED IN TEMRS OF WHAT BEST SERVES THE CHRUCH'S INTEREST. HE POINTED OUT THAT "SPANIARDS, THEIR IMMENSE MAJORITY, ARE ALLERGIC TO THE INTERVENTION OF THE CHURCH IN THE POLITICAL FIELD, BECUASE THEY BELIEVE THAT THE CHURCH HAS USED (GOVERNMENT) POWER TO DEFEND ITS SPECIFIC INTERESTS", ANYTHING THEN", HE CONTINUED, "WHICH COULD GIVE THE IMPRESSION THAT CHRISTIANITY OR THE CHURCH IS AIMING AT POLITICAL POWER, OT THAT THE CHURCH EVEN IF SEMI OFFICIALLY, IS ACTIVE IN THAT FIELD WOULD NOW BE A DANGER," THE CARDINAL CONCLUDED, "THE CHURCH SHOULD NOT GIVE THE IMPRESSION THAT IT IS TIED TO A PARTICULAR PARTY NOR THAT IT IS AMBITIOUS FOR POWER IN ORDER TO IMPOSE ON ALL ITS EVANGELICAL POSTULATES".
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5. THE CARE OF THE CARDINAL'S WORDING AND THE LEGITIMACY OF THE CHURCH OWN ADVANTAGE IN KEEPING CLEAR OF PARTISAN POLITICS NOTWITHSTANDING, HIS REMARKS HAVE IMPORTANT POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS PARTICULARLY IN THE DIFFUSE, AMORPHOUS POLITICAL CENTER, WHERE THE INSIS TENCE OF SOME ON THE EXPLICIT RETENTION OF THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC LABEL REPRESENTS AN IMPORTANT ELEMENT OF SICORD, THOUGH IT IS BY NO MEANS THE MOST IMPORTANT OBSTACLE TO ELECTORAL ALLIANCE (REF). MOREOVER, IT IS NOT ONLY A MATTER OF PERSONAL COMMITMENT TO THE CD LABEL, SPANISH POOLS HAVE SHOWN IT TO HAVE SIGNIFICANT ELECTORAL APPEAL, PRESUMABLY A FUNCTION OF THE RESPECTABILITY, THE "SAFE" IMAGE, THE LABEL AFFORDS ITS BEARERS, WHETHER THEY BE MORE CONSERVATIVELY OR MORE PROGRESSIBELY INCLINED.

6. THE CARDINALS REMARKS ARE THE MOST EXPLICIT PUBLIC

DECLARATION YET OF WHAT HAS BEEN KNOWN FOR SOME
TIME TO BE THE CHURCH'S POSITION. CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS
ARE THE ONES AFFECTED: THE CHURCH LONG AGO BLASTED
THE RIGHT WING LOONIES WHO STYLE THEMSELVES" GUERILLEROS
OF CRISTO REY", THE CDS UP TO NOW DEFENDEC THE CONTINUED
USE OF THE NAME ON THE GROUNDS THAT THEY ARE
EXPLICITLY NON CONFESSIONAL AND THE THE NAME STANDS FOR
AN IMPORTANTLY DISTINCT POLITICAL APPROACH. WHETHER
TARANCON'S DELARATION WILL CAUSE THEM TO BACK OFF
REMAINS TO BE SEEN, BUT ON BALANCE WE EXPECT THEY MAY
STICK WITH THE LABEL. THIS "CHRISTIAN LETTER" SHOULD
HELP, HOWEVER, TO BOLSTER THE CHURCH' IMAGE OF STAYING
ABOVE POLITICAL FACTION.STABLER

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